



HQ AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB TX



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Football carries Army's message

By Sig Christenson

Express-News Military Writer

Web Posted : 01/03/2003 12:00 AM

Seventy-eight of the nation's top high school football players will meet this weekend for the 2003 All-American Bowl, but for the Army it's more than just another game.

It's also a chance to win hearts, minds and recruits.

"From my standpoint, it's the premier sports event of its type for high school all-star football players," said Lt. Gen. Dennis Cavin, head of the Army Accessions Command, which oversees recruiting, basic training and officer leader development.

"It's the first time these young athletes will get to play other athletes of equal caliber, equal capability, all across the scrimmage line," he added. "Each one of them are standouts in their own schools and there may be two or three other great standouts, but we're bringing in the very best this nation has."

The All-American Bowl will kick off at 6 p.m. Sunday in the Alamodome. It features dozens of gifted players, among them Danville, Calif., quarterback Kyle Wright, Baytown Lee's Drew Tate and Chris Leak of Charlotte, N.C. All three signal callers are headed to big schools.

The Army also will salute the city of San Antonio by conducting a rare "Twilight Tattoo" at 7:30 p.m. this evening in the Alamodome. The hour-long Tattoo, which is free, is a pageant accompanied by music that outlines the Army's history. Until now, it has been held in only New York City and the metro Washington, D.C., area.

The Army sees the game as a big draw in Texas, a state known for its love of Friday night football, and is covering the bowl's cost — \$1.5 million — for the second straight year.

The bowl started in Dallas three years ago. It moved to the Alamo City last year and drew 17,000 fans — 42 of whom offered to sign on the spot.

The Army also landed 1,300 leads for possible recruits and calculates that the game is worth \$6 million in advertising, in part from a 78-city tour in which the athletes are selected and a nationwide TV audience on ESPN2.

"I want to expose the Army to a much broader audience than we might otherwise get," said Cavin, who expects a crowd of 25,000 this year and hopes to see the contest rival the McDonald's High School All-American Basketball Game, held each spring.



The U.S. Army's 3rd Infantry Performance Team gets ready for the big game. They practiced Thursday at the Alamodome. Joshua Trujillo/Express-News

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There's a good reason for the Army's investment. While it met its recruiting goals in 2001 and 2002, and is slightly ahead after the first quarter of the 2003 fiscal year, the Army endured a lean period during the 1990s that prompted a radical transformation effort.

In 2001, it dumped its venerable slogan, "Be All You Can Be," and began its controversial "Army of One" ad campaign. The Army hired a new ad firm and this year has launched a \$230 million campaign.

Not everyone cheers the concept. Syndicated columnist and retired Army Col. David Hackworth said the money, appropriated by Congress, ought to be spent on better housing, badly needed equipment and training.

"Here we are faced with a war in Korea and another war in Iraq, and these dollars would be well better spent providing a sharpening of the bayonet or improving the lot of the soldier," he said.

But Col. Thomas Nickerson, director of strategic outreach for the command, said the Army's mission of recruiting 110,000 people a year is difficult, and reaching out to young people through advertising and the Internet is absolutely necessary.

"If you never get the message out to your audience about service to the country, about the opportunities — the over 200 jobs and 180 jobs in the reserves — how will they ever know?"

Cavin wants to see the Army reach out to families who may not have had anyone serve in uniform. Many of those going into the armed services today join in part because of fathers, mothers or other close relatives who served a generation ago.

The Army has also made a major push to increase its share of Hispanics. The Army found that just 10 percent of its enlistees were Hispanic, even though the group constitutes 14 percent of the nation's population.

To remedy that problem, the Army started a multimillion-dollar ad campaign aimed at Hispanics and crafted by Cartel Creativo, a San Antonio firm. It saw progress this year as the number of new Hispanic soldiers rose to 12.7 percent of 79,604 recruits.

Former Army Secretary Louis Caldera, the nation's first Hispanic secretary of the Army, echoed Cavin and others in seeing benefits in event advertising such as the All-American Bowl.

"I just saw a Rose Parade program of last year's West Point entry," he said, noting that well over a million people see the Rose Parade live and tens of millions on television.

"... And so there is a payoff for that kind of initiative," Caldera said.



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Lackland gets a shot at smallpox vaccine

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Fourteen airmen, including one general, rolled up their sleeves Thursday and became the first people in San Antonio to be inoculated against smallpox since the Pentagon ended the practice more than a decade ago.

The vaccine was given to medical personnel at Lackland AFB's Wilford Hall Medical Center. Eight officers and six enlistees were selected after being screened for medical conditions that would disqualify them from getting vaccinated.

They'll now administer the vaccine to others, or — in the case of an outbreak — care for those infected with smallpox.

"If there was a case of smallpox identified, it would be assumed that this was a biowarfare or terrorist event," said Col. (Dr.) Larry Hagan, educational director for Wilford Hall's Department of Allergy and Immunology.

Wilford Hall and an undisclosed number of other military installations have started vaccinating volunteers as a first step toward preparing for a terror attack involving smallpox.

As many as 200 specialists and other personnel at Wilford Hall will be vaccinated when the Pentagon issues the order, which Hagan expects to come soon.

A little more than 10 million public health workers in communities around the country will be given the vaccinations under a plan recently unveiled by President Bush, who was vaccinated just before Christmas. He has shown no adverse effects, a White House spokesman said.

Though the federal government is offering the vaccine to volunteer smallpox response teams, it's not recommending that residents get inoculations. Provisions, however, are being made for those who want the vaccine.

Civilian vaccinations won't begin until after Jan. 24, the date when the Homeland Security Act of 2002 takes effect. Bill Pierce, a spokesman with the Department of Health and Human Services, said he believes that, so far, only the military has been given the vaccine.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will send about 40,000 doses of vaccine to the Texas Department of Health, which will distribute them to hospitals and public health departments.

The Defense Department wouldn't say Thursday how many doses it will use, but Pentagon spokesman Jim Turner said more than 500,000 troops would receive it.

"Our program basically reflects in many ways the public health program, but for our designated personnel it is mandatory for certain people in the military who would be deploying to certain high-risk areas," he said.

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That likely means troops serving in the Persian Gulf region, already inoculated against anthrax, will be given the smallpox vaccine.

As the vaccination program began in San Antonio, the Air Force took extra care in administering the vaccinations.

It gave them in a small building away from the main medical center and sealed off the inoculation area around the upper arm with see-through patches. That will prevent anyone from coming into contact with the vaccine, a live virus that can spread to others.

The Air Force didn't identify those taking the vaccine, citing Pentagon policy. A 25-year-old immunization technician and a 32-year-old physician said they harbored no fears about the inoculations, given by a thin, finger-length needle.

"For me, the benefits far outweigh the risks," the doctor said.

A health scourge for centuries, smallpox was declared eradicated in 1980 by the World Health Organization, with the last naturally occurring case found three years before in Somalia. Military vaccinations continued, but were limited to recruits entering basic training.

The Pentagon's vaccination program ended in 1990, but was revived after the 9-11 attacks and a spate of letters laced with anthrax that followed.

"If you thought that airliners hitting skyscrapers was a low-probability event before 9-11, if you thought high-grade weaponized anthrax was a low probability before 9-11, I think the administration now is moving very much in the direction of taking precautions," said Andrew Krepinevich Jr., a former aide to three defense secretaries who heads the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. "And, arguably, not moving fast enough to suit some people."